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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2007EDU0112-001071
Aug. 29, 2007

Ministry of Education

LEARNNOW BC VIRTUAL SCHOOL RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD

VICTORIA – British Columbia's virtual school, LearnNow BC, has received national recognition and a bronze medal from the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC) for its cutting-edge technology for distance education, Minister of Education Shirley Bond announced today.

"It's wonderful to receive a national award for LearnNow BC, which is setting an excellent standard for distance education across the country," said Bond. "More than 33,000 students in B.C. learn online and our services continue to expand to meet students' needs for choice and flexibility in their K-12 education."

Winners of the IPAC Award for Innovative Management were announced at a luncheon ceremony today at the 2007 IPAC Annual Conference in Winnipeg. LearnNow BC was one of 55 entries competing under the theme of "New Service Breakthroughs with Technology." Cancer Care Ontario took gold for developing an information system to reduce patient wait times and Nunavut Education took silver for its job training and skills assessment system.

In 1990, IPAC launched its IPAC Award for Innovative Management to recognize exceptional management within Canada's public sector. Each year IPAC's board of directors and award sponsors choose a new theme, and nominations are evaluated by a jury of public servants, academics and business people.

LearnNow BC offers students the opportunity to combine traditional classrooms, textbooks and after-school study sessions with video lessons organized over the internet, online tutors and access to virtual libraries.

"When students have more options over their education, their achievement improves," said Bond. "B.C.'s virtual school allows students to choose from a wider variety of courses not offered at their schools, or to take classes that better suit their lifestyles – a feature that is especially beneficial to elite athletes."

Launched in October 2006, LearnNow BC has attracted students at record rates. Of the 650,000 K-12 students in British Columbia, close to five per cent of students are enrolled in some form of distance education in addition to their regular school.

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LearnNow BC fulfils a Throne Speech commitment to initiate a new virtual school to provide B.C. students a new option for learning. The Virtual School Society, a B.C. non-profit organization, developed the LearnNow BC portal and operates the portal with the support of a grant from the B.C. Ministry of Education. Through collaborative arrangements between the Ministry of Education, service providers and school districts around the province, the society provides a wide range of flexible educational programs and services to B.C. students.

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Media contact: Lara Perzoff
Public Affairs Bureau
Ministry of Education
250 356-5963
250 920-9040 (cell)

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